



Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment

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May 27, 2024, 6:30pm ET

Note: The data cut-off for this product was 1:00pm ET on May 27. ISW will cover subsequent reports in the May 28 Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly called on member states to lift their prohibitions against Ukraine using Western-provided weapons to strike within Russian territory. The NATO Parliamentary Assembly adopted a declaration on May 27 calling for NATO states to support Ukraine's "international right" to defend itself by lifting "some restrictions" on Ukraine's use of Western weapons to strike Russian territory.[1] The declaration also calls for member states to accelerate their deliveries of critical weapons to Ukraine, and more than 200 representatives of NATO member states supported the declaration. Some NATO states, including the UK, have already lifted such restrictions on weapons they provide to Ukraine, but not enough Western states have done so to allow Ukraine to challenge Russia's sanctuary from which it can freely conduct airstrikes or stage ground operations against Ukraine.[2] Swedish Defense Minister Pal Jonson told Swedish outlet *Hallandsposten* on May 26 in response to a question about Ukraine using Swedish-provided weapons against Russian territory that Sweden supports Ukraine's right under international law to defend itself through combat operations against Russian territory so long as these operations comply with international laws on combat.[3]

Spain signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement with Ukraine on May 27.[4] The agreement stipulates that Spain will provide Ukraine with one billion euros (about \$1.08 billion) worth of military aid in 2024 and another five billion euros (about \$5.4 billion) worth of aid before 2027.[5] *El Pais* reported on May 27 that the new military aid package will include 19 restored Leopard tanks (likely referring to 19 previously-announced Leopards), Patriot air defense missiles, a "large batch" of 155mm artillery ammunition, and other Spanish-produced weapons.[6] *El Pais* reported that Spain intends to send 10 refurbished Leopard tanks to Ukraine before June 30.[7]

Ukrainian forces continued to target Russian long-range early warning radar systems and oil and gas infrastructure within Russia on May 26 and 27. Ukrainian outlet *Suspilne* reported on May 27 citing its sources in Ukrainian special services that the Ukrainian Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) flew drones a record 1,800 kilometers to strike a Voronezh-M long-range early warning radar system in Orsk, Orenburg Oblast on May 26.[8] Satellite imagery dated May 26 and 27 shows new burn marks near the radar system, but the extent of damage to the system is unclear.[9] Oryol Oblast Governor Andrey Klychkov claimed on May 27 that Ukrainian drone strikes damaged an administrative building at a Rosneft fuel station in Livny, Oryol Oblast, and images of the aftermath show extensive damage to the building.[10] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces also intercepted a drone over Bryansk Oblast, another drone over Belgorod Oblast, six drones over Oryol Oblast, and four drones over Krasnodar Krai overnight.[11] Krasnodar Krai Governor Veniamin Kondratyev claimed that falling drones caused fires in Krinitsa and Dzhanhot, Krasnodar Krai.[12]

Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly told German Chancellor Olaf Scholz before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine that Ukraine is not an independent state and that Russia can unilaterally and forcibly change Ukraine's borders. Ukrainian media reported that Scholz stated at the Freedom for Democracy Festival in Berlin on May 26 that Putin stated that "Ukraine and Belarus are parts of Russia" and that Scholz's discussion with Putin demonstrated that Putin thinks that one can change borders "with the help of force." [13] Putin has consistently demonstrated that he does not consider Ukraine an independent state with its own history, identity, and culture separate from Russia, as evidenced by his 2021 essay, "On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians"; that his war aims include the total defeat of Ukraine; and that he has expansive territorial ambitions in Ukraine.[14]

The *New York Times* (NYT) reported on May 26 that Western intelligence officials stated that the Russian General Staff's Main Directorate (GRU) are behind a series of low-level sabotage operations throughout Europe that aim to disrupt Western arms supplies to Ukraine and create the appearance of a European movement opposing support for Ukraine.[15] The *NYT* stated that the GRU often recruits locals to conduct arsons

and noted that the concerted Russian effort has targeted a paint factory in Poland, homes in Latvia, an IKEA store in Lithuania, and a warehouse in the United Kingdom connected with arms supplies to Ukraine. Western officials have recently reported on widespread Russian sabotage efforts throughout Europe, and NATO reported on May 2 that Russia is intensifying its hybrid activities in Europe.[16] Russian investigative outlet *The Insider* reported on April 29 that GRU agents established a long-term presence in the Czech Republic and Greece and have been conducting operations, including attacks on ammunition depots and assassination attempts, since 2014.[17]

Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated on May 27 that he signed documents that will allow French military instructors to visit training centers in Ukraine.[18] Syrskyi stated that he and Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov had a video call with French Defense Minister Sebastien Lecornu, and Syrskyi welcomed France's initiative to send French military instructors to Ukraine. Syrskyi also expressed optimism that France's determination would encourage other Ukrainian partners to join this "ambitious project." The French Defense Ministry told French outlet *Agence France-Presse* (AFP) on May 27 that France has been discussing sending French military instructors to Ukraine since French President Emmanuel Macron met with European leaders on February 26 to discuss European support for Ukraine but did not explicitly confirm that France would send French military instructors to Ukraine.[19]

The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) offered to help Armenia mitigate the effects of flooding in northern Armenia, although Armenia has not publicly requested help from Russia. The Russian MoD claimed on May 27 that it commanded the 102nd Military Base in Gyumri, Armenia to allocate personnel and equipment to help Armenia mitigate the effects of floods and mudflows.[20] The Russian MoD stated that it will send Russian military personnel to the disaster areas at Armenia's request. The Russian MoD's phrasing obscures whether Armenia has actually requested help from Russia, however. Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova claimed on May 26 that the Russian-Armenian Center for Humanitarian Response (RACHR) (an organization under the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations) gave portable motor pumps to the Armenian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) to assist with rescue operations in flooded areas and that the RACHR is in "constant contact" with the Armenian MVD's Center for Crisis Management.[21] ISW has not observed reports from Armenian officials or Armenian media that Armenia specifically requested assistance from Russia. Armenian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Ani Badalyan stated on May 27 that Armenia would coordinate measures for mitigating the impacts of the floods with international partners after assessing the overall damage.[22] Russian officials are likely publicizing Russian offers to help Armenia mitigate the effects of a natural disaster to portray Russia as a reliable ally amid Armenia's ongoing attempts to distance itself from political and security relations with Russia.[23]

Russian officials are considering delisting the Taliban as a prohibited organization in Russia and will likely do so in the near term. Russian Special Representative to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov stated on May 27 that the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Ministry of Justice reported to Russian President Vladimir Putin that Russia can remove the Taliban from its list of prohibited organizations.[24] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that the Taliban is the "real power" in Afghanistan and that the initiative to remove the Taliban from the prohibited organization list "reflects objective reality." [25] Russian officials have yet to delist the Taliban as a prohibited organization, but Kabulov's and Lavrov's comments suggest that Russia will do so in the near term. Kabulov added that Taliban representatives will attend the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in early June 2024.[26] Putin met with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent on May 27 and signed a statement on bilateral commitments, which included intentions to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan.[27] The Kremlin has maintained contacts with the Taliban since the Taliban deposed the Afghan government in 2021, although more outright Russian recognition of the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan will likely portend increased Russian-Taliban cooperation. Russia likely hopes to leverage its relationship with the Taliban to degrade the operations of Afghan-based Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP), which organized and conducted the March 22 Crocus City Hall terrorist attack in Moscow, among other things.[28] The Taliban continue efforts to repress anti-Taliban groups throughout Afghanistan, including ISKP, and Russia may hope to help the Taliban intensify its anti-ISKP activities.[29] Kazakhstan delisted the Taliban as a terrorist organization in December 2023, and Uzbekistan has expanded agreements with the Taliban in recent years.[30] Russia may view direct engagement with the Taliban as an increasingly normalized trend among Central Asian states.

Russia may sign an agreement with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) exchanging weapons for a Russian logistics hub at Port Sudan on the Red Sea. SAF Assistant Commander-in-Chief Yasser Al-Atta stated on May 25 that a SAF delegation will travel to Russia in the near future to conclude an agreement exchanging "vital weapons and munitions" for a Russian logistics hub at Port Sudan.[31] Al-Atta described the planned Russian hub as "not exactly a military base." [32] A prominent, Kremlin-awarded Russian milblogger also claimed on May 27 that the SAF was able to recapture

several areas of Khartoum due to supplies of Iranian drones.[33] Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and Special Representative for the Russian President in Africa and the Middle East Mikhail Bogdanov met with SAF head Abdel Fattah al Burhan and several other Sudanese officials during a two-day visit to Sudan on April 28 and 29.[34] ISW previously assessed that Russia may be switching sides in the Sudanese civil war to support the SAF in pursuit of acquiring a Red Sea naval base and that Russian backing of the SAF would greatly benefit Iran by aligning Russian and Iranian policy and strategy in the region.[35]

Key Takeaways:

- **The NATO Parliamentary Assembly called on member states to lift their prohibitions against Ukraine using Western-provided weapons to strike within Russian territory.**
- **Spain signed a 10-year bilateral security agreement with Ukraine on May 27.**
- **Ukrainian forces continued to target Russian long-range early warning radar systems and oil and gas infrastructure within Russia on May 26 and 27.**
- **Russian President Vladimir Putin reportedly told German Chancellor Olaf Scholz before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine that Ukraine is not an independent state and that Russia can unilaterally and forcibly change Ukraine's borders.**
- **The *New York Times* (NYT) reported on May 26 that Western intelligence officials stated that the Russian General Staff's Main Directorate (GRU) are behind a series of low-level sabotage operations throughout Europe that aim to disrupt Western arms supplies to Ukraine and create the appearance of a European movement opposing support for Ukraine.**
- **Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Oleksandr Syrskyi stated on May 27 that he signed documents that will allow French military instructors to visit training centers in Ukraine.**
- **The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) offered to help Armenia mitigate the effects of flooding in northern Armenia, although Armenia has not publicly requested help from Russia.**
- **Russian officials are considering delisting the Taliban as a prohibited organization in Russia and will likely do so in the near term.**
- **Russia may sign an agreement with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) exchanging weapons for a Russian logistics hub at Port Sudan on the Red Sea.**
- **Ukrainian forces recently made confirmed advances near Lyptsy and Russian forces advanced near Svatove and northwest of Avdiivka.**
- **Russian forces continue formalization efforts for irregular units.**

Assessed Control of Terrain in Ukraine and Main Russian Maneuver Axes as of May 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Tom Thacker

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* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

We do not report in detail on Russian war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We will continue to evaluate and report on the effects of these criminal activities on the Ukrainian military and the Ukrainian population and specifically on combat in Ukrainian urban areas. We utterly condemn Russian violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

- Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine (comprised of three subordinate main efforts)
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and encircle northern Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast
- Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis
- Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign
- Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts
- Russian Technological Adaptations
- Activities in Russian-occupied areas
- Ukrainian Defense Industrial Base Efforts
- Russian Information Operations and Narratives
- Significant Activity in Belarus

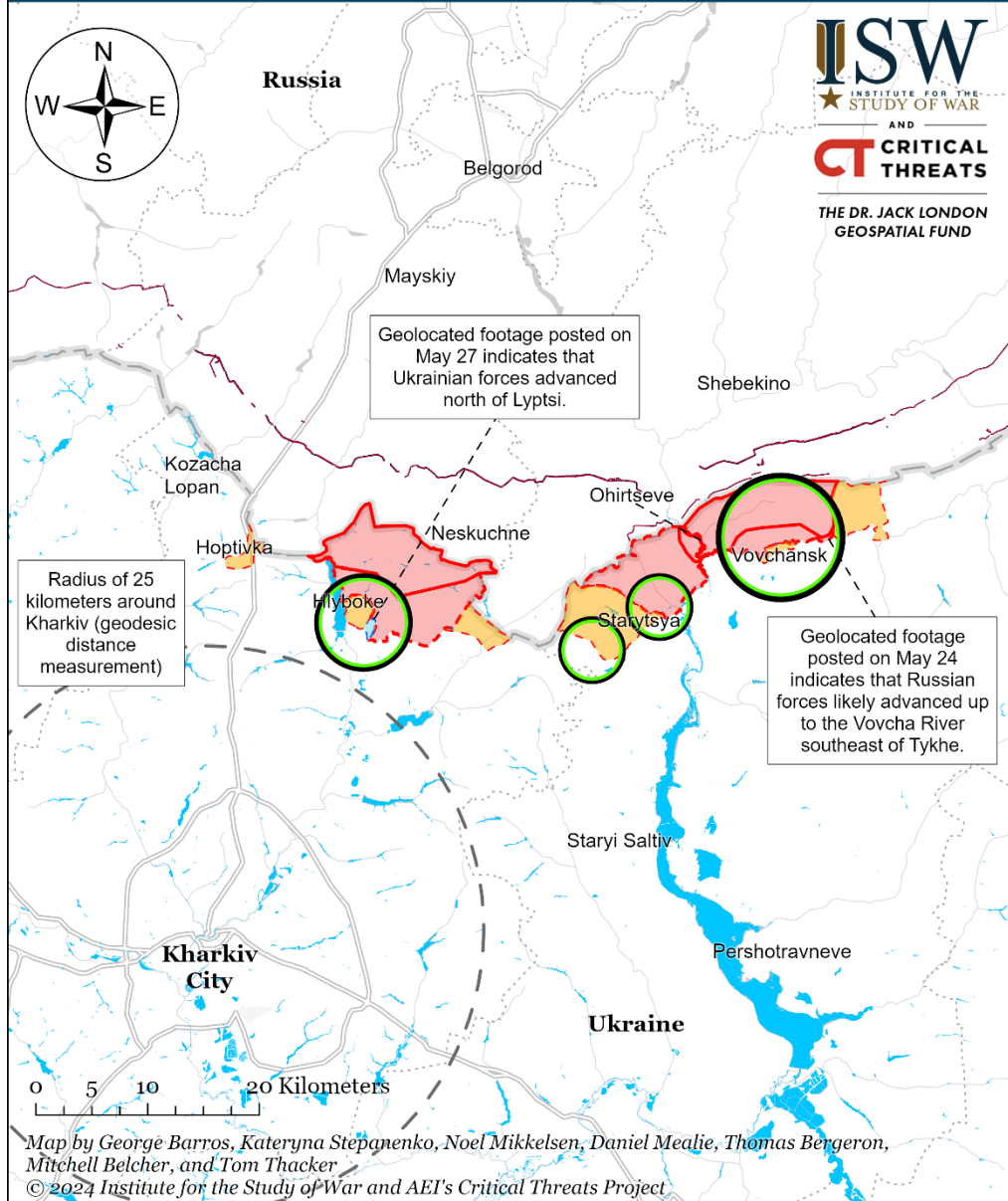
Russian Main Effort – Eastern Ukraine

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #1 – Kharkiv Oblast (Russian objective: Push Ukrainian forces back from the international border with Belgorod Oblast and approach to within tube artillery range of Kharkiv City)

Ukrainian forces recently made marginal advances north of Kharkiv City in the Lyptsi direction amid continued Russian attacks on May 27. Geolocated footage published on May 27 shows that Ukrainian forces recently recaptured some territory in fields north of Lyptsi.[36] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 500 meters in depth north of Lyptsi, but ISW has not observed confirmation of this claim.[37] Russian forces continued ground attacks near Lyptsi and Ternova (on the international border between Lyptsi and Vovchansk).[38] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces repelled a Ukrainian ground attack near Hlyboke (immediately north of Lyptsi).[39] Elements of the newly formed Russian 245th Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment (47th Tank Division, 1st Guards Tank Army [GTA], Moscow Military District [MMD]), the "Anvar Spetsnaz" detachment (possibly referring to the BARS-25 "Anvar" volunteer detachment), and elements of the Russian Africa Corps are reportedly fighting in northern Kharkiv Oblast.[40]

Russian forces continued attacks northeast of Kharkiv City near Vovchansk on May 27, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces marginally advanced on Lenina Street in central Vovchansk, where heavy fighting continues.[41] Russian milbloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain a presence in the Vovchansk Aggregate Plant in central Vovchansk on the northern bank of the Vovcha River.[42] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces also continued ground attacks near Starytsya (southwest of Vovchansk).[43]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kharkiv as of May 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



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Map by George Barros, Kateryna Stepanenko, Noel Mikkelsen, Daniel Mealie, Thomas Bergeron, Mitchell Belcher, and Tom Thacker
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- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- ▬ Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- ▬ Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- ▬ Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- ▬ Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- ▬ Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- ▬ Russian Field Fortifications

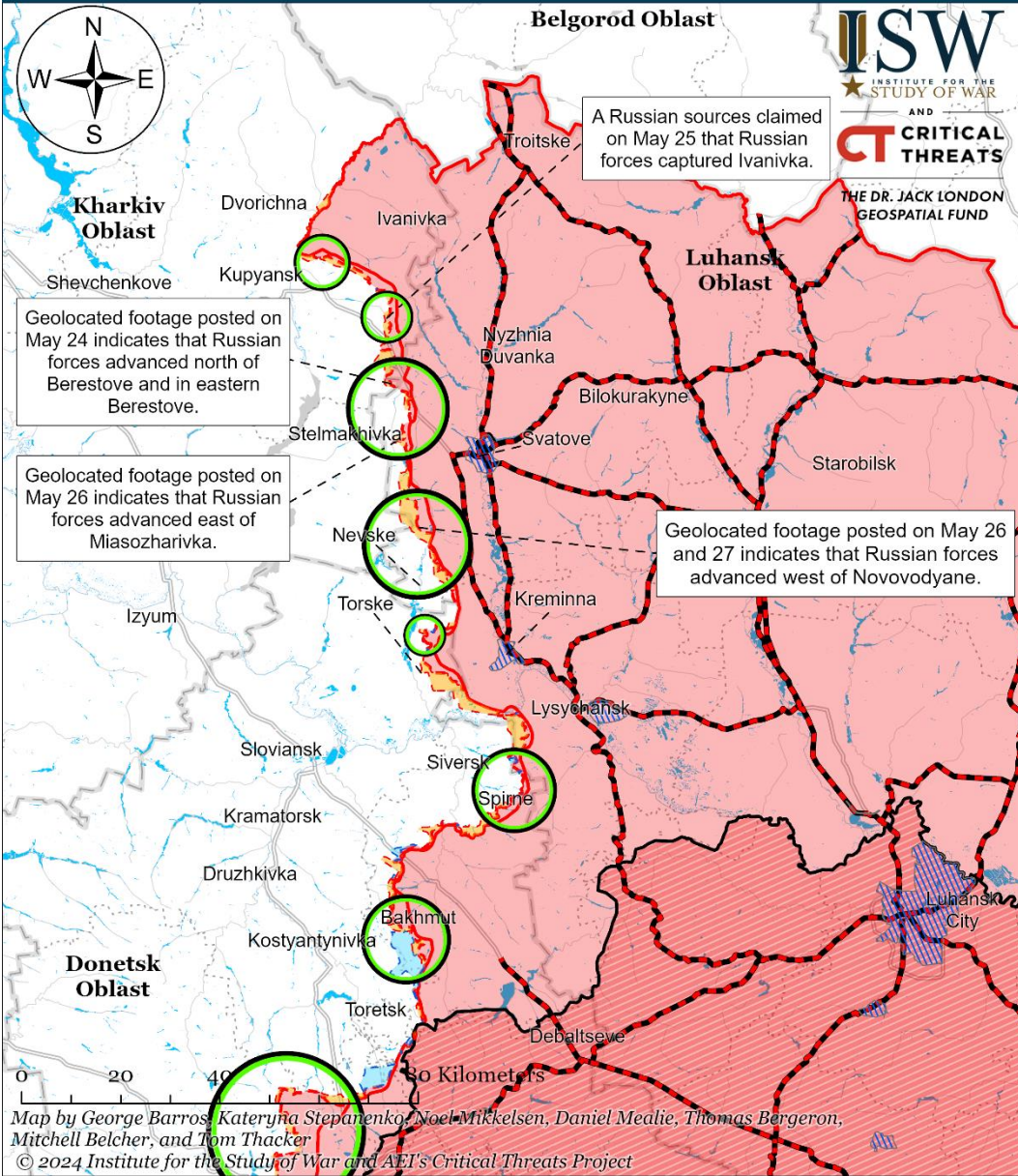
* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Note: A Russian source claimed on May 23 that Russian forces were advancing 500 meters per day in the Lyptsi direction.

Russian Subordinate Main Effort #2 – Luhansk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the remainder of Luhansk Oblast and push westward into eastern Kharkiv Oblast and northern Donetsk Oblast)

Russian forces recently made confirmed advances along the Kupyansk-Svatove-Kreminna line amid continued Russian offensive operations in the area on May 27. Geolocated footage published on May 26 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced east of Myasozharivka (west of Svatove).[44] Additional geolocated footage published on May 26 and 27 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced west of Novovodyane (southwest of Svatove).[45] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces seized Ivanivka (southeast of Kupyansk).[46] Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced towards Stelmakhivka (northwest of Svatove), northwest of Novoselivske (northwest of Svatove), 300 meters within Berestove (northwest of Svatove), and within Bilohorivka (south of Kreminna).[47] ISW has not observed confirmation of these Russian claims, however.[48] A prominent Russian milblogger claimed that available footage only partially corroborates the Russian MoD's claim on May 26 that Russian forces seized Berestove but that the village is so small that it is possible that Russian forces seized the whole settlement.[49] Russian forces continued offensive operations northeast of Kupyansk near Synkivka; east of Kupyansk near Petropavlivka and Kyslivka; northwest of Svatove near Ivanivka, Stepova Novoselivka, and Berestove; west of Svatove near Myasozharivka; southwest of Svatove near Hrekivka, Druzhelyubivka, Novoyehorivka, and Novovodyane; northwest of Kreminna near Nevske; west of Kreminna near Terny; and south of Kreminna near Hryhorivka and Bilohorivka.[50]

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Luhansk Oblast as of May 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

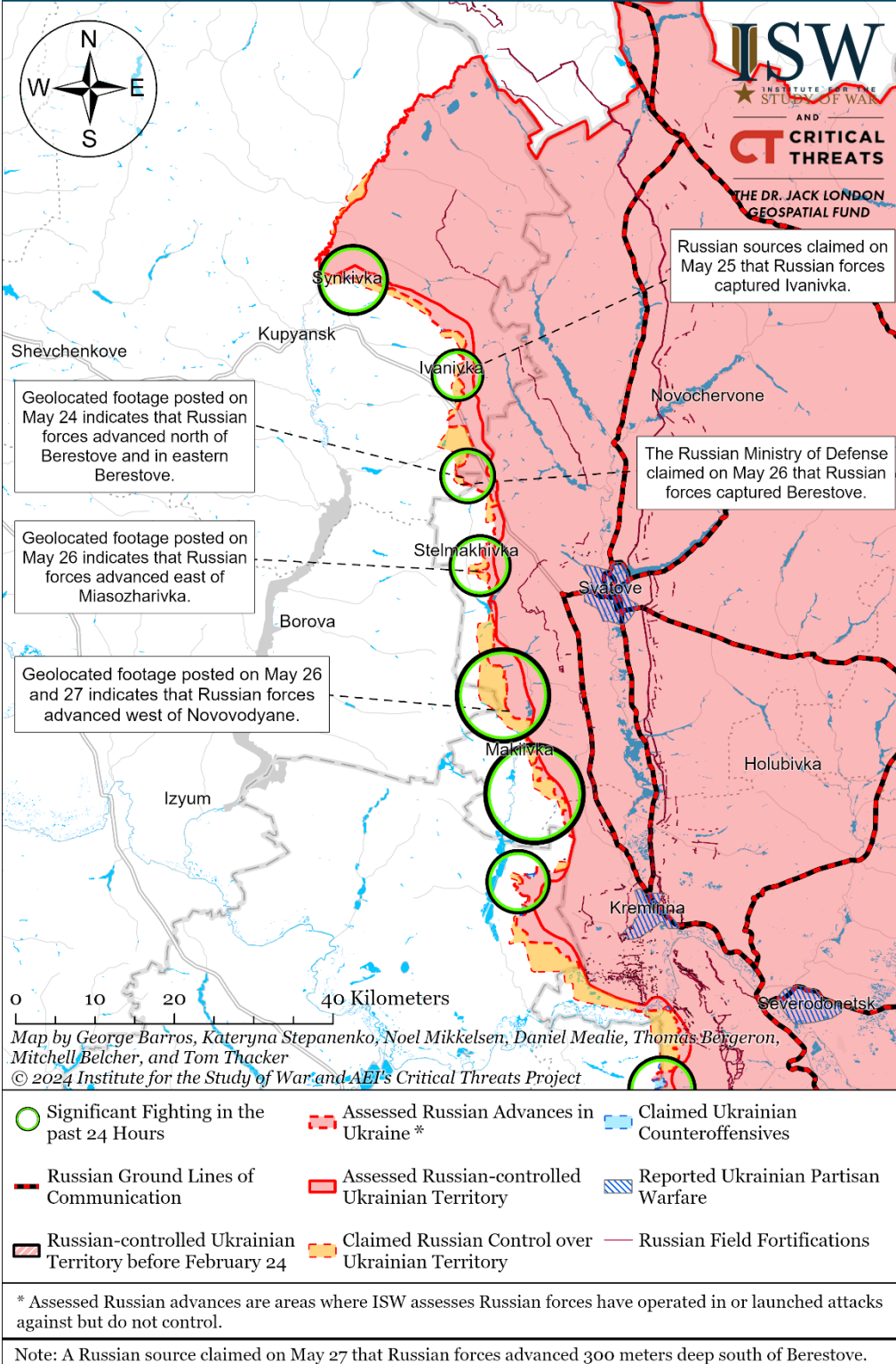


- Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
- Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
- Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
- Russian Ground Lines of Communication
- Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
- Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
- Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
- Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

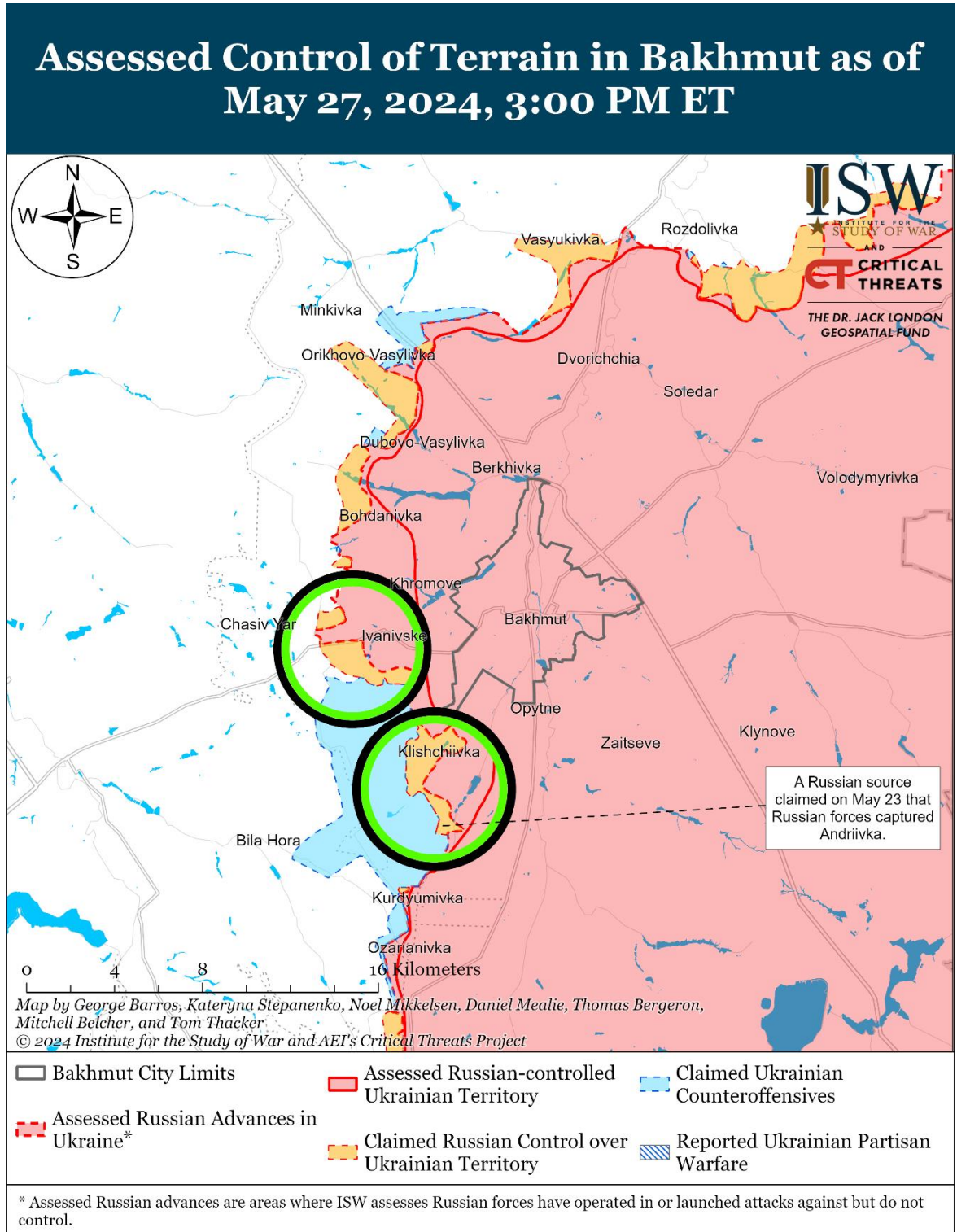
Note: A Russian source claimed on May 25 that Russian forces captured 70 percent of Berestove.

Assessed Control of Terrain Around Kupyansk as of May 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET

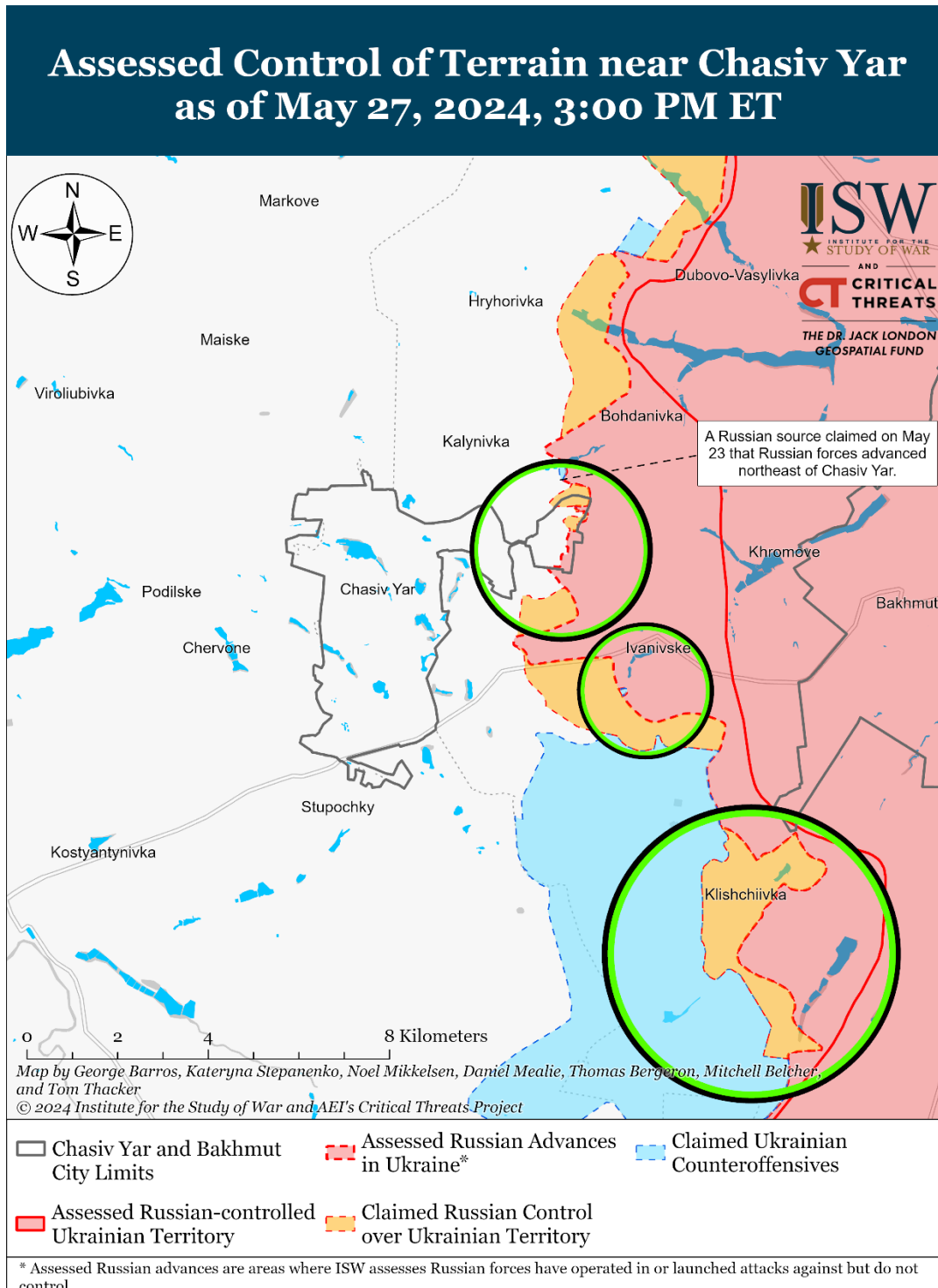


Russian Subordinate Main Effort #3 – Donetsk Oblast (Russian objective: Capture the entirety of Donetsk Oblast, the claimed territory of Russia’s proxies in Donbas)

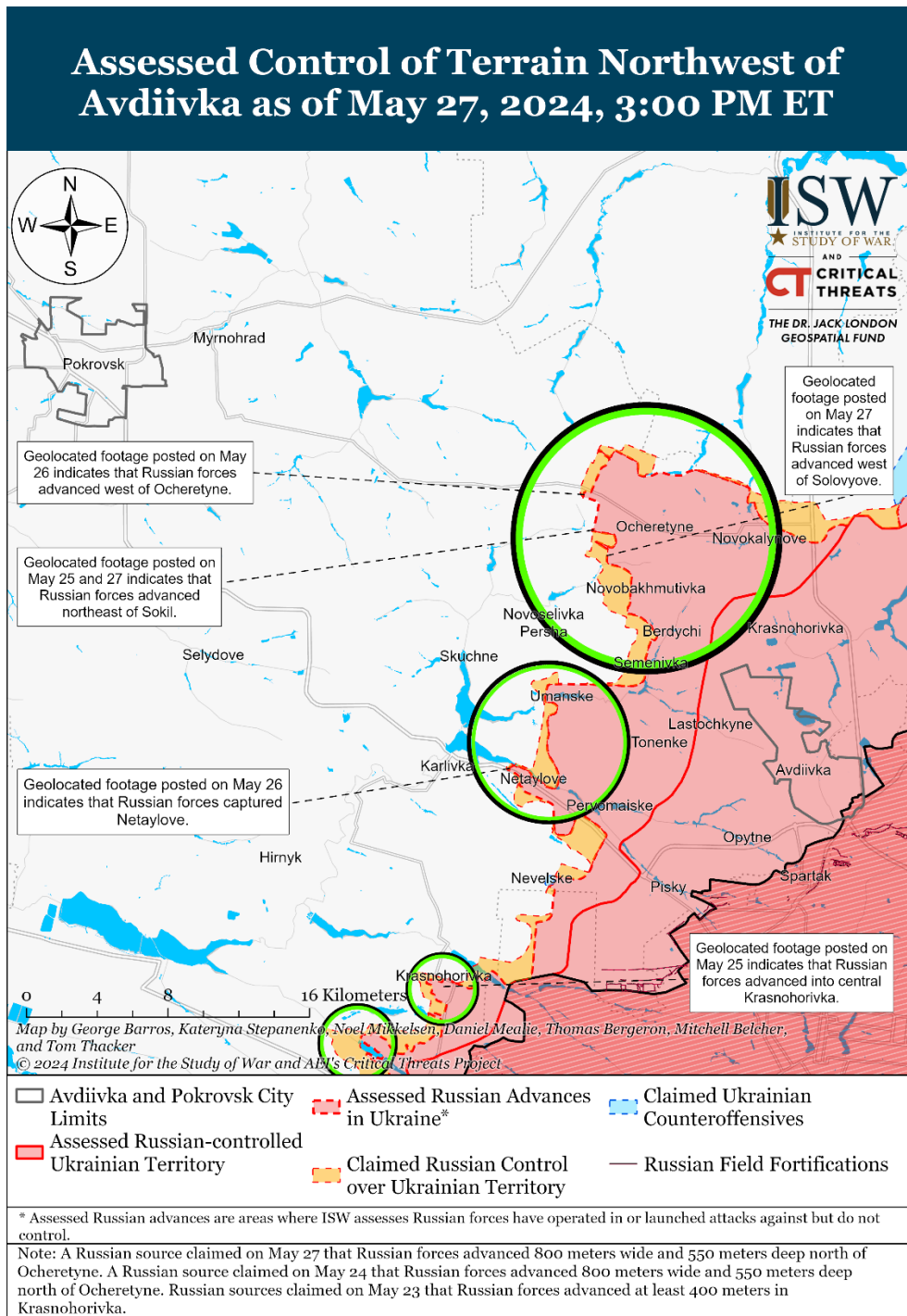
The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces continued ground assaults southeast of Siversk near Vyimka, Verkhokamyanske, and Spirne on May 27.[51] Elements of the Russian 106th Airborne (VDV) Division reportedly continue operating near Rozdolivka (south of Siversk).[52]



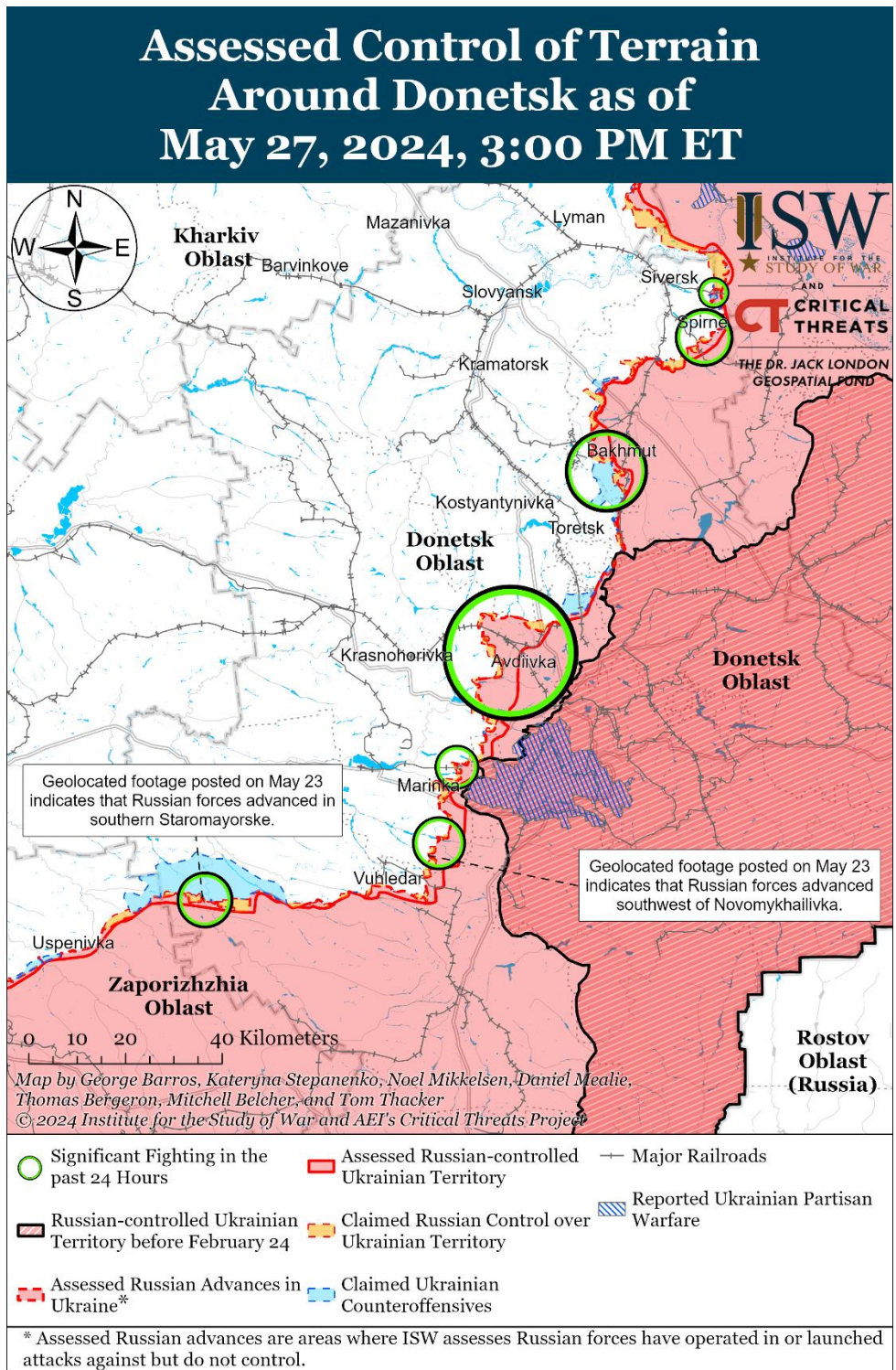
Russian forces continued offensive operations near Chasiv Yar on May 27, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced along a front up to 720 meters wide on the eastern and southern outskirts of the Kanal Microraion (easternmost Chasiv Yar), although ISW has not observed visual evidence of this claim.[53] Russian forces also continued ground attacks near the Novyi Microraion (eastern Chasiv Yar), east of Chasiv Yar near Ivanivske, and southeast of Chasiv Yar near Klishchiivka and Andriivka.[54] Elements of the Russian 85th Motorized Rifle Brigade (2nd Luhansk People's Republic Army Corps [LNR AC]) are reportedly operating in the Bakhmut (Chasiv Yar) direction.[55]



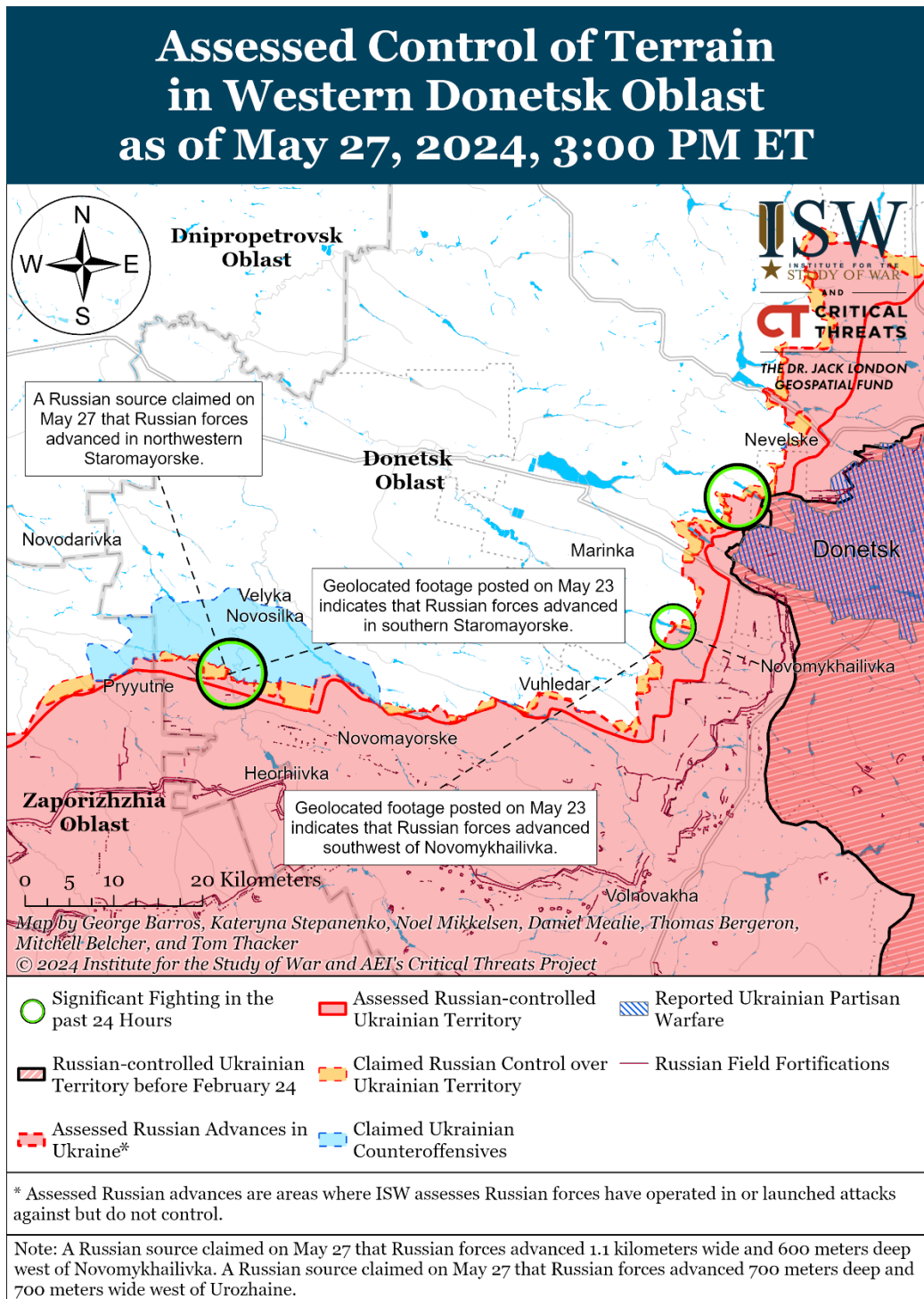
Russian forces recently made confirmed advances northwest of Avdiivka amid continued Russian offensive operations in the area on May 27. Geolocated footage published on May 25, 26, and 27 indicates that Russian forces recently advanced west of Ocheretyne (northwest of Avdiivka), northeast of Sokil (northwest of Avdiivka), and west of Solovyove (northwest of Avdiivka).[56] The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) claimed that Russian forces seized Netaylove (west of Avdiivka), and Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced northwest and south of the settlement.[57] Russian forces likely seized Netaylove as of May 26.[58] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 800 meters wide and 550 meters deep north of Ocheretyne.[59] Fighting also continued north of Avdiivka near Kalynove; northwest of Avdiivka near Novooleksandrivka and Novoselivka Persha; west of Avdiivka near Umanske and Yasnobrodivka; and southwest of Avdiivka near Nevelske.[60]



Russian forces reportedly advanced southwest of Donetsk City on May 27, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in an area up to 1.1 kilometers wide and 600 meters deep west of Novomykhailivka (southwest of Donetsk City) and advanced up to 200 meters deep near Paraskoviivka (southwest of Donetsk City).[61] Fighting also continued west of Donetsk City near Krasnohorivka and southwest of Donetsk City near Pobieda, Kostyantynivka, and Solodke.[62] Elements of the Russian 5th Motorized Rifle Brigade (1st Donetsk People's Republic [DNR] AC) reportedly continue operating near Krasnohorivka.[63]

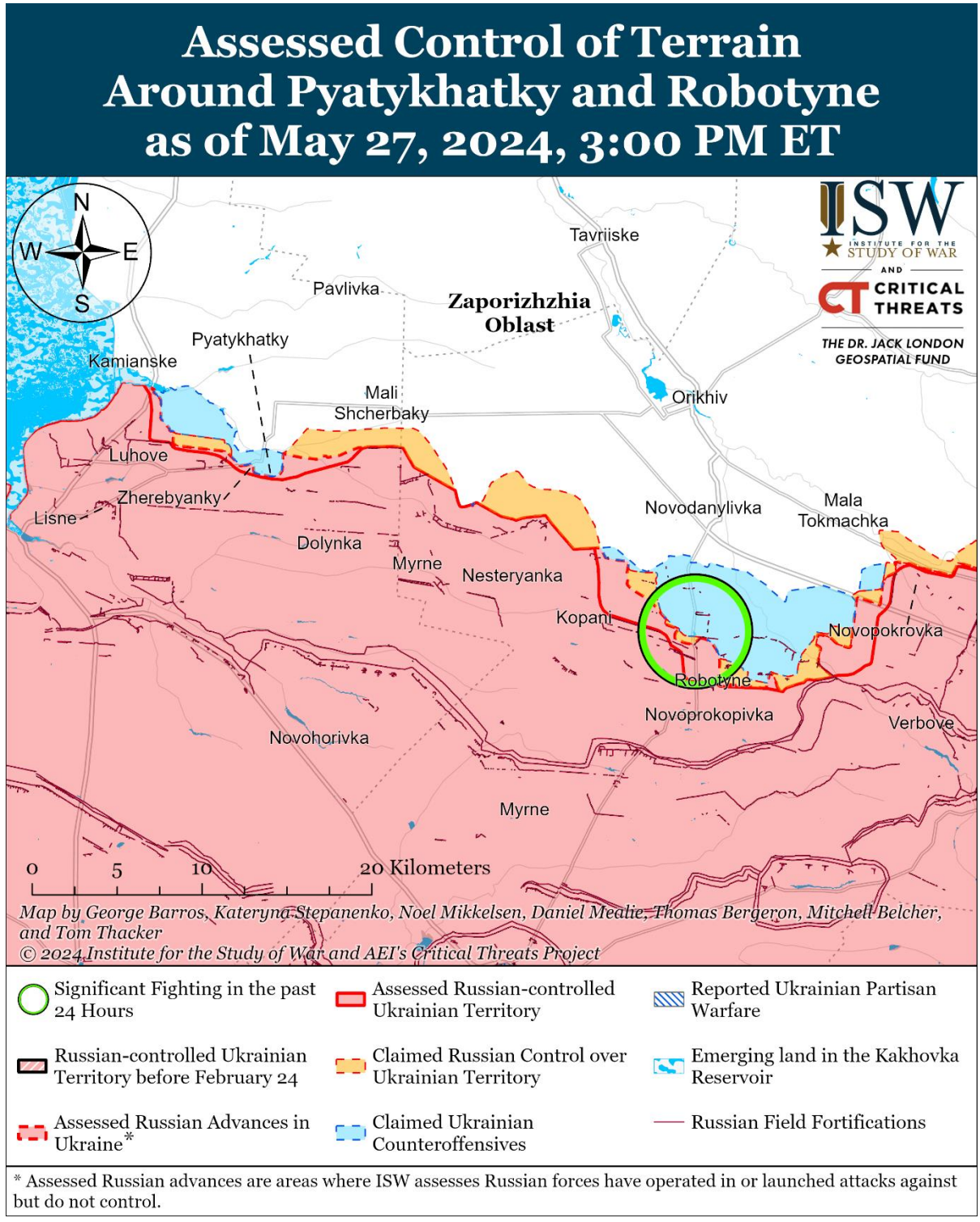


Russian forces reportedly advanced in the Donetsk-Zaporizhia Oblast border area on May 27, but there were no confirmed changes to the frontline in the area. Russian milbloggers claimed that Russian forces advanced in northwestern Staromayorske (south of Velyka Novosilka).[64] A Russian milblogger claimed that Russian forces advanced up to 700 meters wide and 700 meters deep west of Urozhaine (south of Velyka Novosilka).[65] ISW has not observed visual evidence of these claims. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled Russian assaults near Staromayorske and Urozhaine.[66] Elements of the Russian 5th Tank Brigade (36th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Eastern Military District [EMD]) are reportedly operating in the Velyka Novosilka direction, and elements of the 11th Air Force and Air Defense Army (Russian Aerospace Forces [VKS] and EMD) are reportedly operating near Urozhaine.[67]

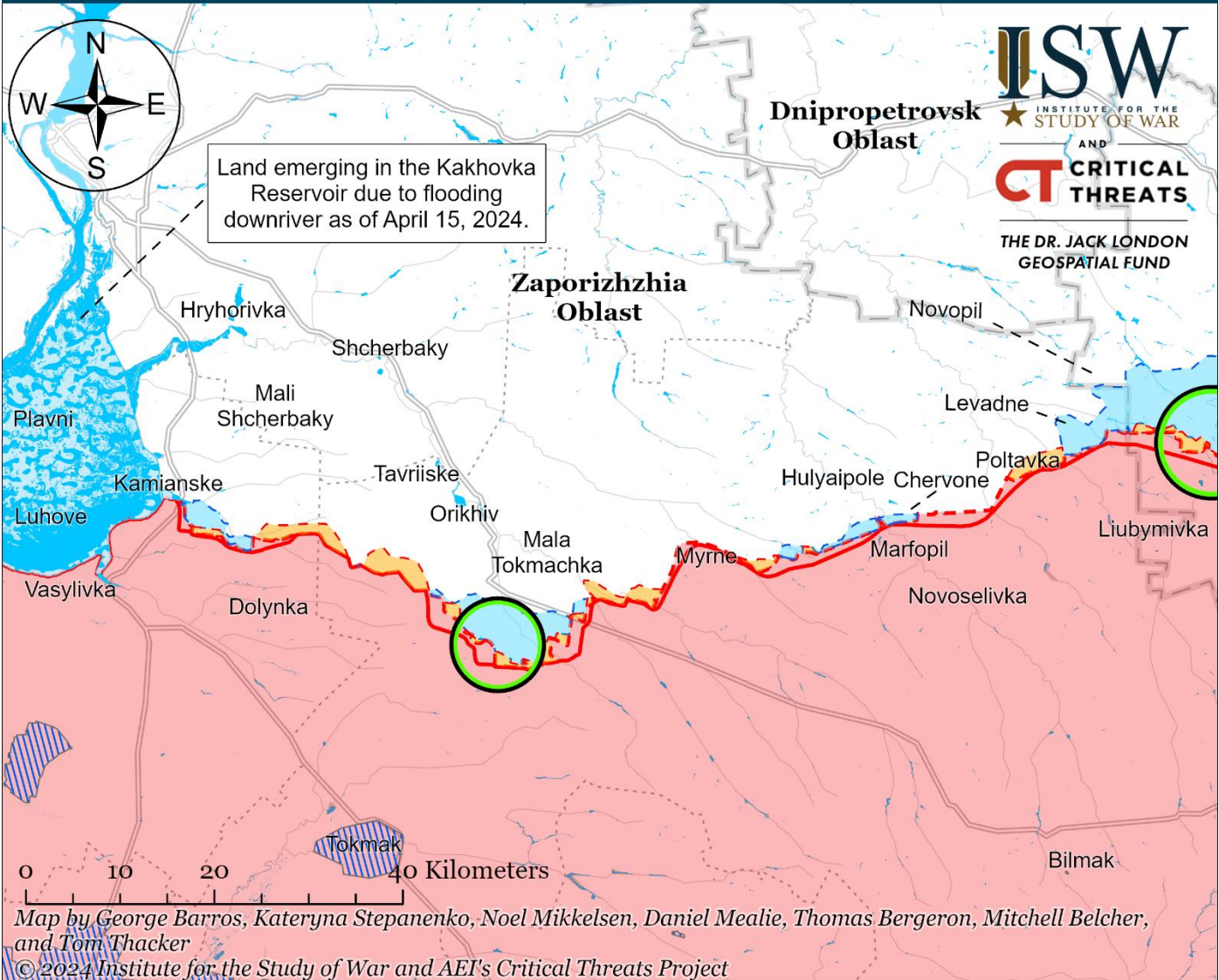




Russian Supporting Effort – Southern Axis (Russian objective: Maintain frontline positions and secure rear areas against Ukrainian strikes)

Positional engagements continued in western Zaporizhzhia Oblast near Robotyne and Verbove (east of Robotyne) on May 27.[68] Elements of the Russian 291st Motorized Rifle Regiment (42nd Motorized Rifle Division, 58th Combined Arms Army [CAA], Southern Military District [SMD]) are reportedly operating near Robotyne.[69]



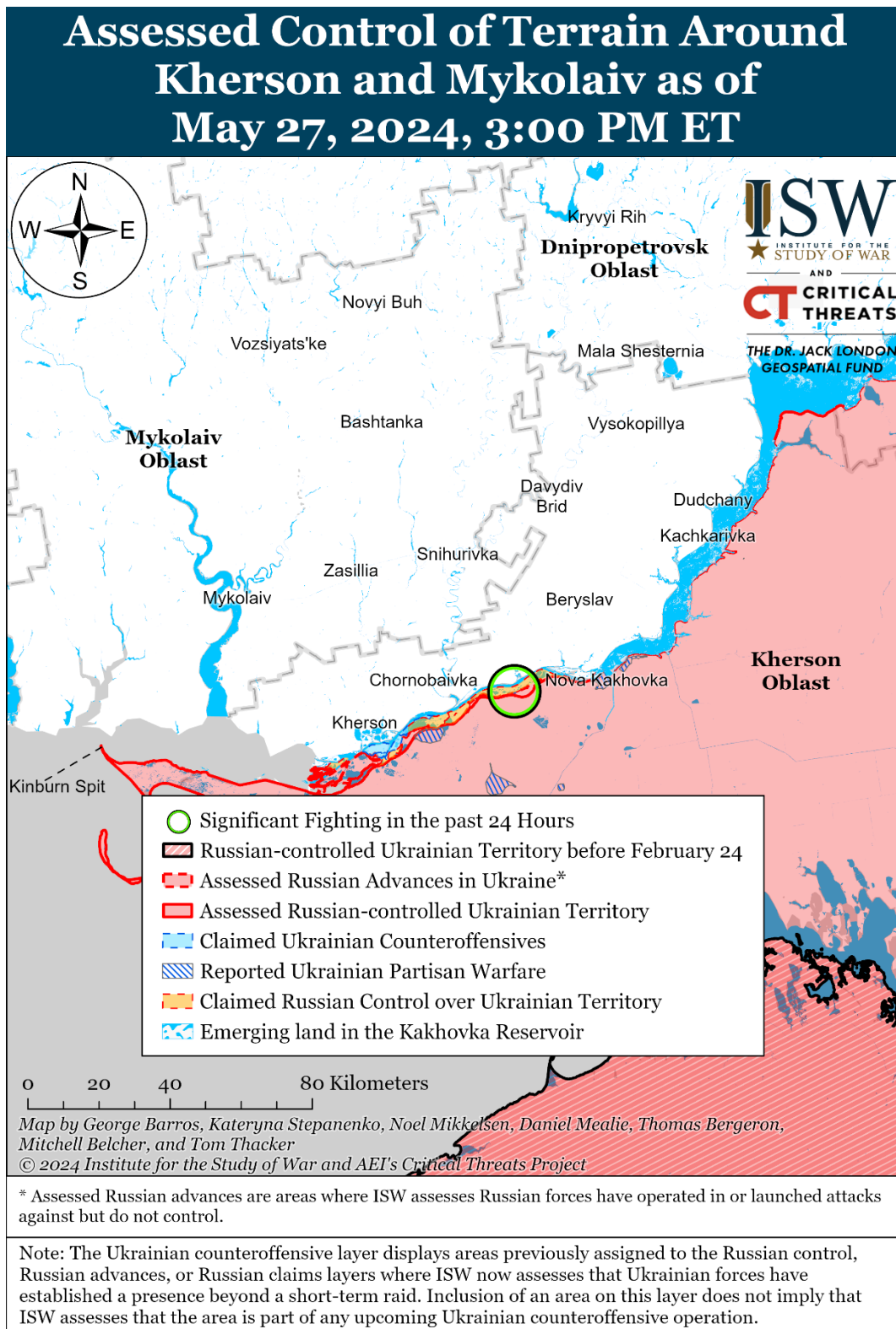
Assessed Control of Terrain Around Zaporizhia as of May 27, 2024, 3:00 PM ET



-  Significant Fighting in the past 24 Hours
-  Assessed Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory
-  Reported Ukrainian Partisan Warfare
-  Russian-controlled Ukrainian Territory before February 24
-  Claimed Ukrainian Counteroffensives
-  Emerging land in the Kakhovka Reservoir
-  Assessed Russian Advances in Ukraine*
-  Claimed Russian Control over Ukrainian Territory

* Assessed Russian advances are areas where ISW assesses Russian forces have operated in or launched attacks against but do not control.

Positional engagements continued in left (east) bank Kherson Oblast, including near Krynky, on May 27.[70] The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Ukrainian forces repelled four Russian attacks near Krynky and "other left-bank bridgeheads," suggesting that Ukrainian forces may have positions on the east bank elsewhere.[71] It is unclear to which area the Ukrainian General Staff may be referring, however.



Russian Air, Missile, and Drone Campaign (Russian Objective: Target Ukrainian military and civilian infrastructure in the rear and on the frontline)

Ukraine's Southern Operational Command reported on May 27 that Russian forces struck the airport in Zaporizhzhia City with a Kh-59 missile on May 26.[72]

Russian forces continued intense glide bomb strikes against Kharkiv City and elsewhere in northern Kharkiv Oblast on May 27. The Ukrainian General Staff reported that Russian forces fired 25 guided glide bombs against northern Kharkiv Oblast during the day on May 27, including two glide bombs against Kharkiv City.[73] Ukrainian officials reported that Russian glide bombs struck an industrial facility and residential area in Kharkiv City, killing one and injuring 11.[74]

Russian Mobilization and Force Generation Efforts (Russian objective: Expand combat power without conducting general mobilization)

Russian forces continue formalization efforts for irregular units. The Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) Vostok Battalion, which has been subsumed into Rosgvardia as part of Russian formalization efforts, claimed on May 27 that Rosgvardia is creating a special rapid response (SOBR) detachment and a riot police (OMON) battalion on the basis of the Vostok battalion.[75] Deputy Head of the DNR Main Directorate of Rosgvardia and DNR OMON and SOBR commander Alexander Khodakovsky was previously the commander of the Vostok battalion, and he may be trying to keep elements of the battalion under his command.

The United Kingdom Ministry of Defense (MoD) reported on May 27 that the Russian MoD is issuing a new journal for political instruction that aims to indoctrinate Russian soldiers into the Kremlin's justifications for the war in Ukraine. The UK MoD reported that the Russian MoD began issuing the new journal on May 22 and are calling it *Politrak*. [76] Head of the Russian MoD's Main Military-Political Directorate Colonel General Viktor Goremykin reportedly states in a forward to the journal that the journal will draw heavily from the Soviet legacy of political education publications for military personnel.[77] The UK MoD reported that the journal emphasizes that Russian forces are fighting "Nazis" in Ukraine, casts doubt on the idea of Ukrainian statehood, and promotes other justifications for the full-scale invasion.[78]

Russian Technological Adaptations (Russian objective: Introduce technological innovations to optimize systems for use in Ukraine)

Nothing significant to report.

Ukrainian Defense Industrial Efforts (Ukrainian objective: Develop its defense industrial base to become more self-sufficient in cooperation with US, European, and international partners)

Ukraine's Western partners continue to support Ukraine's war effort. Sweden announced on May 22 a military aid package for Ukraine worth 75 billion Swedish kroner (about \$7 billion) over three years.[79] The German government announced on May 22 that German transferred 10 Leopard tanks and 8,500 rounds of 155mm artillery ammunition to Ukraine.[80] Germany also delivered an IRIS-T air defense system to Ukraine on May 24.[81] The UK-led International Fund for Ukraine announced on May 24 a new package worth 150 million GBP (about \$191 million) to support Ukraine's air defense and maritime capabilities.[82]

Ukraine's Western partners continue to support the buildup of Ukraine's defense industrial base (DIB). The defense ministers of Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Netherlands sent a letter to the European Commission, the EU's common Foreign Service, the European Defense Agency, and other European countries on May 26 outlining the importance of strengthening Ukraine's DIB.[83] The letter called for the creation of long-term and strategic industrial partnerships between Ukrainian and European companies.

Ukraine continues efforts to domestically produce weapons for use on the battlefield. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense (MoD) stated on May 22 that the Ukrainian MoD registered 13 samples of new weapons and military equipment and adopted one new anti-aircraft missile system model in the past week.[84] Ukrainian Digital Transformation Minister Mykhailo Fedorov and Ukrainian State Security Service (SBU) Head Vasyl Maluk stated on May 22 and 23 that Ukrainian forces have used "Sea Baby" naval drones equipped with Grad MLRS systems in combat recently.[85]

Activities in Russian-occupied areas (Russian objective: Consolidate administrative control of annexed areas; forcibly integrate Ukrainian citizens into Russian sociocultural, economic, military, and governance systems)

ISW is not publishing coverage of Russian-occupied areas today.

Russian Information Operations and Narratives

The Kremlin continues to use Kremlin-affiliated Ukrainian actors to support information operations to discredit Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and the Ukrainian government. Kremlin-affiliated former Ukrainian MP Viktor Medvedchuk stated on May 27 that Ukrainian forces must stop following Zelensky's orders because he lost his legitimacy as Ukraine's president and cannot be Ukraine's Supreme Commander-in-Chief.[86] The Kremlin is currently intensifying information operations alleging that Zelensky is illegitimate following May 20, which would have been the end of Zelensky's first term as president had Russia not launched the full-scale invasion.[87] The Ukrainian law defining martial law, which Ukraine has been under since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, clearly states that "conducting elections of the President of Ukraine" is "prohibited in the conditions of martial law." [88] Zelensky's decision to postpone the March 2024 elections is in full accordance with the Ukrainian constitution. Russian officials' focus on Zelensky's presidential term is only the latest talking point in the Kremlin's longstanding effort to discredit Zelensky and label any pro-Western Ukrainian government as illegitimate.[89] Medvedchuk is a key ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin and was rumored to be a candidate for the head of the Russian-controlled Ukrainian government that the Kremlin sought to establish following the envisioned quick regime change in Ukraine in 2022.[90] The Kremlin may be setting informational conditions to eventually declare a Kremlin-backed actor as Ukrainian president instead of Zelensky and will likely increasingly use Kremlin-affiliated actors to further informational efforts to discredit the Ukrainian government.[91]

Russian media is heavily covering ongoing protests in Armenia, likely to present Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan as unpopular and punish him for Armenia's recent efforts to distance itself from Russia. Kremlin newswire TASS published extensive coverage of protests in Yerevan on May 27 calling for Pashinyan's resignation for his decision to transfer control of four border villages in Tavush Province to Azerbaijan in the wake of Armenia's loss of Nagorno-Karabakh.[92] A prominent, Kremlin-awarded Russian milblogger continues to closely follow the protest movement calling for Pashinyan's resignation and frequently spreads information operations accusing Pashinyan of "weakness" and incompetence for ceding territory to Azerbaijan after Russia failed to prevent the loss of Nagorno-Karabakh.[93] Pro-Kremlin actors may amplify reports of discontent or perpetuate ongoing Kremlin information operations alongside Armenian opposition protests to further pressure Pashinyan into mending relations with Russia.

Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) announced on May 27 that it will start offering a program for specialists in information warfare from September 1, 2024, and that the Russian presidential administration is supporting the program.[94] The program illustrates that the Kremlin and wider Russian society view information operations as a legitimate and specialized element of statecraft.

Significant activity in Belarus (Russian efforts to increase its military presence in Belarus and further integrate Belarus into Russian-favorable frameworks and Wagner Group activity in Belarus)

Russia deployed fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft to Belarus for joint military exercises with the Belarusian Air Force. The Belarusian Ministry of Defense (MoD) announced on May 27 that the Belarusian Air Force will conduct joint flight exercises with the Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) from May 27-31 to improve the unified regional air defense system.[95] The Belarusian MoD stated that Russian VKS army aviation crews and Belarusian aviation, air defense, and radio-technical units will participate in the joint exercises.[96] The Belarusian Haijun project reported that a Russian Mi-24 and Mi-8 helicopter arrived at Baranovichi airfield, Brest Oblast on May 25, which the project described as the first Russian helicopters to deploy to Belarus since August 2023.[97] The Belarusian Haijun project reported on May 27 that Russia deployed eight Mi-24 and Mi-8 helicopters in total to Baranovichi and that at least two Russian Su-24MR reconnaissance aircraft and at least four Su-30SM fighter aircraft are also at the airbase.[98]

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko met with Altai Krai Governor Viktor Tomenko in Minsk on May 27 to discuss strengthening cooperation in agriculture and other fields.[99] Tomenko met with Gomel Oblast Executive Committee Chairperson Ivan Krupko on May 26 about strengthening cooperation.[100]

Note: ISW does not receive any classified material from any source, uses only publicly available information, and draws extensively on Russian, Ukrainian, and Western reporting and social media as well as commercially available satellite imagery and other geospatial data as the basis for these reports. References to all sources used are provided in the endnotes of each update.

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